

MR. TEASER'S DILEMMA

By WILLIAM WALLACE COOK

Mr. Teaser was a burglar.

One Christmas eve he went a-burgling and, in the drawing-room of the entered house, the rays from his bull's-eye lantern fell across sundry presents laid out in a neat array on a table. There was a box of cigars. Mr. Teaser was on the point of setting the lantern down and putting the cigars into a capacious bag which he was carrying when he discovered a card with these words written in a feminine hand: "For Charlie, from his loving wife." He dropped the box as though it were something hot. "Two-fers," he muttered; "friend-killers for Charlie."

Placing the bull's-eye on a neighboring chair, its beams directed upon the scene of operations, he dropped into his bag a gold watch, in a plush case, marked: "Ella, from

Charlie." He followed the watch with a set of silver spoons and various other knick-knacks.

Then, as he was about to lower himself out of the window by which he had entered, he heard a sharp, metallic "click" behind him. Turning with more haste than grace, he found himself looking into the threatening barrel of a revolver.

"Not a move!" commanded a middle-aged man in pink pajamas.

"Now look at that!" whimpered Mr. Teaser, dropping back against the wall. "It looks like a grafter hadn't no right to make himself a Christmas present; none wotever. It's up to you, boss. You've got the dead-wood sure this time, pard, and I caved graceful."

"Not so loud! You'll wake my wife," said the man in the pink pajamas.

"Wot's the racket," whispered Mr. Teaser.

"I've been watching you ever since you came in," said the other, "and I want to

say that your sins of omission are greater than those of commission."

"Come again?" said Mr. Teaser.

"We'll let it pass," answered the man in the pink pajamas. "You may replace those presents on the table."

"Yes sir," and Mr. Teaser did so. "Now that I've done the handsome thing by you, you might let me go."

"You have not done the handsome thing by me."

"How's that?"

"You have left that box of cigars. They are a present to me from my wife and—here the man's voice quivered—"she will undoubtedly expect me to smoke them. Now, then, sir," and the voice grew stern and determined, "if you do not rob me of that box of cigars I will turn you over to the authorities."

"You don't expect me to smoke 'em?"

"No; I would not advise any man to commit suicide, even a burglar. You're in a fix and so am I. Take that box of cigars,

write something on the card that will clear me, and go away."

"Sure!" and Mr. Teaser took the box and wrote this on the card:

"Knowing how superfine are the cigars which a doting wife presents to her loving husband at Christmas time, I leave all other booty, and in rapture make off with this box of Perfectos."

"Tom Teaser, Burglar."

"How's that?" asked Mr. Teaser, reading the words aloud.

"You're a humorist," ventured the man in the pajamas.

"I'm a plain liar, if there ever was one," returned Mr. Teaser.

"That's good enough. Now climb out of the window and make off."

Mr. Teaser was not slow in doing so. As the man in the pink pajamas closed the window, Mr. Teaser whistled softly to himself and skulked along the fence towards the rear of the next house. —Detroit Free Press.



A SURPRISE ON SANTA CLAUS.

By FRANK B. WELCH.

Some time ago old Santa Claus
Was sound asleep one night;
Within his distant northern home
Was not a single light.
When through the tangled wood close by
A throng of children stole,
Intent upon a big surprise
To give the jolly soul.

'Twas not the Christmas time, for then
He never is at home—
He's sailing 'round the world, you know.
O'er cot and palace dome.
But Christmas was not far away,
And all the little folk
Had come to play on Santa Claus
A Merry Christmas joke.

From far and near they came, and all
With mischief were aglow;
They scrambled over fences and
They floundered through the snow;
Until at last with cautious steps
They came to Santa's door
Where, hushed and listening, they heard
The good old fellow snore.

Soon by the aid of sundry keys
They made their way inside,
And crept from room to room until
They sleeping Santa spied:
Upon a couch of furs they lay,
In slumber deep he lay,
And through the windows shone the moon
As brightly as the day.

Each one an extra stocking brought,
And holding them on high
The rogues youngsters 'round his couch
Woke Santa with the cry:
"Oh Santa Claus, awake, awake!
'Tis Christmas morn, you know,
And you must fill our stockings now
Before we homeward go!"

The waking saint up-started then
And chuckled loud with glee,
The shouting children 'round him were
A funny sight to see;
He took the stockings, every one,
And piled them on his bed,
Then with a merry laugh and shout
Unto the children said:

"Be off! be off! you little rogues,
Back home and wait the day!
You'll find when Christmas comes,
Old Nick will come your way;
There's not a single toy at hand,
My pack is stored away,
My reindeer roam the distant hills
So, to your homes, I say!"

With some a pat and some a kiss
He bade them all adieu,
And with reluctant steps the throng
Soon faded from his view;
"The little elves! the darling rogues!"
Laughed Santa, in his bed,
"God save and keep each little soul
And crown each shining head."

COMING OF THE NEW YEAR.

We Should Enter It With Courage, Hope and Resolution.

The homely maxim about not crying over spilt milk contains one of the best suggestions as to the proper spirit with which we may enter the New Year. We cannot change the past, but we can bend all our energies toward making the future better than the past. The frame of repining and discouragement is fatal to good achievement, but the temper of courage, hope and resolution almost guarantees it. We are all of us tempted to a dismal mood when we reflect how different things would have been with us if we had not made this or that mistake, or met this or that misfortune. It seems as if only a narrow margin prevented our being to-day in much happier conditions. But there always is an illusion about such reasonings. The error we made was probably the outcome of a natural temper or of a long course of habitual action. We could not have done otherwise without being different in personality

and character. The affliction that came to us did not rise out of the dust; it was a part of the providential ordering of life. Except as to deliberate sin, our regrets about the past have little foundation in reason. Many things must have been different to have their outcome other than it is. We have less to reproach ourselves with than we often think for. The main thing is not to quarrel with our conditions, but to keep our purposes high and pure.—Watchman.

A New Year's Programme.

"Well," remarked Mr. Jolliwell, "I suppose you are going to make a lot of good resolutions for the New Year?"

"No, I'm not," said Mr. Sirius Barker, with characteristic acrimony, "I'm going to make a lot of bad ones."

"That's an unheard-of proceeding."

"Yes. It's an idea of my own. If I am as successful in breaking my bad resolutions as I have been in breaking my good ones, I'll manage to become a pretty high-toned and estimable citizen."—Washington Star.

SAVED BY NEW YEAR'S DAY.

How a Prisoner Escaped Punishment by Proving an Alibi.

January 1 is the beginning of the new year, according to present day reckoning of time, but before 1752 New Year's day was the 25th of December. Scotland adopted the new style of reckoning before England, and this led to endless confusion. It is on record that a murderer once escaped the clutches of the law by this difference of dates. The crime was committed in Edinburgh on the 27th of December, and the murderer fled across the border. He was captured and charged with having caused the death of an innkeeper in Edinburgh on "the second day of the year of Our Lord 1747." The prisoner was able to prove that on that very day he was in England, and hundreds of miles away from the scene of the murder. Upon this excuse he actually escaped, and his captors did not discover how they had been deceived until after they had released him. In 1752 the 1st of January was declared by law to be

the first day of the new year throughout the three kingdoms, but until then records made in December and January generally bore two dates to prevent the possibility of dispute.—Answers.

To the New Year.

Up to the great heights lead,
With gentlest dream and deed:
Sow thou the perfect seed—
Bind the deep wounds that bleed,
And lift, from darkest night,
Earth to eternal light!
—Atlanta Constitution.

A Financier.

"I don't know what to get my best girl for Christmas."

"Nothing."

"What do you mean?"

"Just what I say. She'll be awful mad, there'll be a terrible quarrel, and then you'll have all the delightful sweetness of a making-up without it costing you a cent."—N. Y. Life.